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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 001721

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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: UNSC SANCTIONS AND PIRACY

REF: PARIS 1718

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen Allegrone, 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: MFA Somalia desk officer Thierry Caboche said on September 12 that France favored a 12-month time limit to the UNSC Somalia sanctions resolution now under consideration in New York, to allow the Security Council to maintain closer supervision over the sanctions process than would the Sanctions Committee. On the piracy issue, he expected that the EU, at its GAERC meeting on September 15, would agree to the creation of a coordination cell that would coordinate EU members' contributions to anti-piracy patrols near Somalia. This arrangement could later evolve into a full ESDP mission, with the coordination cell becoming an operational control center. Although several EU members had expressed interest in participating in the patrolling, Caboche said that none so far, including France, had identified and committed specific vessels or new assets to the task. Caboche reported that the recently hijacked French ship remained anchored just offshore Somalia's Cape Gwardafuy, and had not been moved to Eyl, as was earlier believed. He reported that the two French citizens held hostage were in good condition. END SUMMARY.

UNSC Sanctions

12. (C) We met with MFA Somalia desk officer Thierry Caboche on September 12 to review Somalia-related developments, beginning with the French desire to include in the UNSC sanctions resolution under review in New York a 12-month time limit to the resolution. We noted that this had not featured in earlier resolutions. Caboche said that France wanted this provision to allow the Security Council to maintain closer control over the sanctions process, which France believed was desirable given the turbulent nature of Somali politics, its many shifting alliances, and the need, therefore, for the Security Council to be able to step in periodically (i.e., on a yearly basis), review developments, and make adjustments as necessary. Caboche said that if this provision were not included, management of the sanctions issue would devolve to the UN Sanctions Committee, where everything had to be decided on a unanimous basis. The need for unanimity, in France's view, often led to decisions that were either "black and white" or else bland, as a result of having to seek a lowest-common-denominator position acceptable to all members of the Committee. He stressed that France's position was based on the belief that it was better to increase the Security Council's ability to control and supervise the process.

Piracy

13. (C) Caboche said that EU thinking on anti-piracy

patrolling in the waters around Somalia was proceeding, with EU ministers expected to approve, at the EU GAERC meeting on September 15, the creation of a coordination cell for anti-piracy patrolling. Caboche expected this measure to be approved without debate. Spain would command the cell at this stage, with a French deputy and a staff of "two or three." The cell would provide coordination services only, and would not serve as an operational command center. Operational command would rest at the national level, with each contributing country controlling its own ships. Patrolling would consist of three general missions: (1) patrolling in the Gulf of Aden, where the French believed the center of pirate activity had now shifted; (2) protecting World Food Program ships operating farther to the south; and (3) protecting commercial fishing farther offshore to the southeast. Caboche said that Spain was interested in the fisheries protection mission.

14. (C) Caboche said that several EU members (Greece, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, and France) were interested in participating but that none had made a firm offer to contribute patrol vessels. Caboche said that France was strongly interested and would "participate in the program" but he could not say whether any French ships had already been assigned a mission. He said that "we have plenty of ships available, so we shouldn't have a problem," but he again declined to be specific. He noted that the Canadian operation to escort WFP ships would end before the end of September and that no follow-on force was yet in place. (NOTE: See reftel, para 5, where another MFA official says that initial patrolling will be conducted by a

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French ship and a Spanish ship. END NOTE.)

15. (C) Some EU members, while agreeable to the creation of the coordination cell, would prefer that the EU mission function as a full ESDP mission from the inception. However, Caboche said that mounting a full ESDP mission would take time because of the many financing and chain-of-command issues that would have to be arranged. France wanted to have something in place as soon as possible, hence the coordination cell relying on national services for operational command. He thought that once the coordination cell got off the ground, the move to a full ESDP mission could take place within the next few months. (NOTE: Caboche did not raise the issue of potential NATO coordination with an ESDP anti-piracy mission. END NOTE.)

Latest Hijacking

16. (C) Caboche said that the most recent hijacking of a French vessel involved a sailboat operated by a husband and wife team in their 60s who were trying to sail from Australia to France. They were seized off the coast of Somalia in the Cape Guardafuy area. There were initial indications the ship would be taken to Eyl, but Caboche said that the ship remained anchored offshore near Cape Guardafuy, quite close to the coast ("several hundred meters"). He said that the GOF had had contact with the couple being held hostage and that they seemed to be in good condition. The kidnappers were demanding a ransom in the USD 1.5 million range. Caboche said that "other French services" were managing the hijacking problem, including possible rescue operations, but he said he was not in a position to provide details, nor was he able to say whether the GOF was communicating directly with the hijackers.

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